

Hasina seeks expatriates' help for a next term

BERLIN, Dec 7: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today called upon the Bangladeshis living here to help her return to power in the next election, reports UNB.

"Election is not too far and I want cooperation from all so that we can get the chance to serve the people for the next term," she said at a reception accorded to her by Bangladesh expatriates in Germany at Hotel International on Wednesday night.

The Prime Minister, who is on a tour to three European nations lobbying for duty-and quota-free access of Bangladeshi products to European market, said she is also discussing with European leaders about regularisation of illegal Bangladeshis living in different European countries.

"We have got positive response from them," she said amid cheers. However, she cautioned that Bangladesh expatriates should abide by the rules and regulations of the respective countries. "You should not do anything that may tarnish the image of the country," she told the gathering.

The Prime Minister said she had talked with Italian Prime Minister and signed an agreement for legal entry of Bangladeshi people in Italy. "We do not want that our people will come in an illegal way to these countries. They will come with dignity and respect being competent in all respect."

For developing skilled manpower, she said, her government has given enormous emphasis on computer education and science and technology education in the country and has waived taxes on the import of computer and computer equipment.

She said the government has taken steps for establishing connection with submarine

cables and for setting up 12 science and technology universities in the country.

About the BNP-led oust-government movement, Hasina said the "parties of Khaleda, Ershad and Golam Azam and also the Islamic Oikya Jote have got together to remove her government which, she said, is working day and night for the welfare of the people."

"We are working for the people and will continue to do so. We have successfully faced natural calamities and man-made disasters."

Responding to the demand of Bangladeshi expatriates, Hasina said the government is trying to solve the problems at Dhaka International Airport. "We have arrested the culprits and taken measures to stop harassment of homebound passengers."

About expatriates' right to franchise, she said this requires the support of two-thirds majority in Parliament to bring about fundamental changes in the constitution.

"We have requested the Election Commission and Foreign Ministry to work out a plan for realising this demand," she said and asked the Bangladeshi expatriates to enroll themselves as voters whenever they go to Bangladesh.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former Chhatra League president Enamul Huq Shamim, and AL's German unit leaders Anwarul Islam Ratan, Kazi Abdul Matin, Abdul Quaiyum Manik and Berlin Parliament Member Dr Harman Fargos. All European AL Chairman Anil Das Gupta presided.

UN convention

From page 12
seekers are routinely cheated both at home and abroad. They believe that declaration of International Migrants Day would bear no significance for them unless Bangladesh ratified the UN Convention on the Protection of All Workers and Members of Their Families."

Bangladesh became a signatory to the 1990 convention that guarantees the rights of migrant workers in recipient countries (countries where they migrate to) in 1998. But it is yet to ratify the convention.

Labour and Manpower Minister MA Mannan, while welcoming the UN decision to dedicate a day exclusively for the cause of migrants, said that the government needed further scrutiny of the convention before its ratification.

"Its ratification would have some bindings on us," he said. "After studying the implications we would ratify the convention."

Syed Saiful Haque Asif, executive chairman of the Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE), said that Bangladesh, as a major manpower exporting country, should ratify the UN

convention to ensure that its people working abroad get the migrant rights in the recipient countries.

He referred to other manpower exporting countries including the Philippines and Sri Lanka, which have already ratified the convention.

Regional Representative of IOM Armand Rousselot, who looks after migrant issues in South Asian region, told this correspondent that Bangladesh should ratify the UN convention.

"It requires a good political will and national consensus. From IOM, we would try to promote the cause of the migrants," he said.

According to official sources, the convention needs to be ratified by at least five more countries before it becomes binding on the recipient countries to give the migrants their full rights.

Civil and migrant rights activists feel that a collective campaign by manpower exporting countries could force the recipient countries to ensure due rights to both documented and undocumented workers.

"This is the best time to launch such a campaign, especially since the UN has brought the migrant issue to the fore," said an activist.

Errant Pak envoy

From page 12
matic pressure, recalled the errant diplomat on November 30. But he is yet to leave Dhaka.

Several hundred activists, supporters and members of the Nirmul Committee joined the rally and the procession towards the High Commission. They carried banners and placards and chanted various slogans against Pakistan and the diplomat concerned.

The procession was led by Convenor of the Committee Syed Hasan Imam, its Member-Secretary Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhury and Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak.

Police intercepted the procession soon after it was brought out at about 2:30pm.

In a brief speech, Razzak then said the remarks by the Pakistani diplomat were nothing new and were part of a long-term and deep-rooted conspiracy by the defeated forces and their allies in the country who failed to accept the emergence of Bangladesh.

"Pakistan in collaboration with their allies here has been hatching conspiracy since it has not, in reality, accepted Bangladesh's independence. There is no need of a Pakistani high commission in our country if it fails to accept our independence," Razzak said.

Irfan Raza must apologise unconditionally and be punished for hurting the national pride of Bangladeshis, he said. Mere recall of the diplomat was not enough.

Prof Mannan Chowdhury alleged that the defeated forces were hatching conspiracy with their local allies Golam Azam, Motiur Rahman Nizami and Delwar Hossain Saidee. He blamed Khaleda Zia and HM Ershad for what he said joining hands with the anti-liberation elements for petty political interests.

He urged people to remain vigilant against the anti-liberation forces and elements and foil their evil design of spreading falsehood about the country's glorious past.

City Awami League leader Akhondul Alam, Golam Kuddus of Nirmul Committee and Communist Party leader Morshed Ali also addressed the rally.

Later, a delegation led by Hasan Imam and Prof Mannan Chowdhury proceeded towards

Pakistani High Commission to submit a memorandum. But police again intercepted them in front of the High Commission at about 3pm.

Nirmul Committee members then set fire to a Pakistani flag as there was no official to accept the memorandum. A stenographer offered to take the memorandum but Hasan Imam did not give it to him.

The delegation however submitted the memorandum containing a seven-point demand through a police official on duty at the High Commission.

The demands include unconditional apology by Irfan Raza for his remarks, apology by Pakistan for the genocide in Bangladesh in 1971 and handover of 200 Pakistani soldiers identified as war criminals to the International Court, handover of all information relating to Liberation War to Bangladesh for trial of local war criminals, compensation for the 30 lakh affected families and those violated in '71, and end to 'conspiracy' by the Pakistan High Commission against Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty or closure of the High Commission, immediate return of the money and property plundered in '71 and taking back the stranded Pakistanis.

At a brief rally in front of the High Commission, Hasan Imam criticised it for 'not taking the memorandum.'

He said Pakistan would be treated as an enemy state until they accept these demands. He also urged the people not to use Pakistani goods.

At a brief rally in front of the High Commission, Hasan Imam criticised it for 'not taking the memorandum.'

He said Pakistan would be treated as an enemy state until they accept these demands. He also urged the people not to use Pakistani goods.

Interested people have been requested to contact Dr M Ehsanur Rabbi of Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, House-27, Road-114, Gulshan.

Contact phone numbers are: 8828854 and 8827575. Mobile: 018-237853.



Children of martyred intellectuals formed a human chain by handcuffing themselves in front of the National Press Club yesterday.

— Star photo

PM for cut in drip-feed

From page 1

Seeking more investment from Germany she said increased investment from abroad would spur economic activity that will bring about much-needed economic growth and stability.

Presently direct German investment in the country is not encouraging as available figures show it to be around \$20 million to \$30 million.

Hasina said the government has offered lucrative incentives to attract more investment in Bangladesh. These include tax holiday for 5 years, repatriation of invested capital and profits, working capital loans from local banks for foreign investors, tax exemption of different categories, remittance of up to 50 per cent of salary of foreign technicians and no duty on imported machinery for 100 per cent export-oriented industries.

Inviting joint ventures from foreign entrepreneurs, the Prime Minister said there are many areas where joint ventures can work profitably to the mutual benefit of all partners. From software to the shoe industry, from airlines to telecommunications, and agriculture seed development the options are wide open.

"Investment opportunities are abundant. We would like you to come and exploit these potentialities," Hasina told her German business audience.

Explaining investment policy of the government she said Bangladesh is one of the most open economies in the developing world. The policy allows repatriation of profits, foreign ownership virtually without limit, generous tax-breaks, residency permits for foreign experts etc.

Hasina described Germany as a major development partner and Bangladesh's export destination, saying that over the years Germany provided Bangladesh with development assistance, food aid

and disaster relief.

German development aid in the past has been mainly in the fields of poverty alleviation, energy, railway, industry and agriculture, human resources and development of women, promotion of private-sector industries, infrastructure development, environment and cyclone protection.

Chairman of Asia-Pacific Business Association Peter Clasen and President of Hamburg Chamber of Commerce Nikolas Schues also addressed the seminar focused on Bangladesh's present spectrum.

In response to various queries by Hamburg businessmen about red tape, corruption, problems in ports and land shedding that slow down foreign investment, the Prime Minister said her government is aware of the shortcomings and is working hard to remove all problems creating an investment-friendly climate in Bangladesh.

"We've overcome many obstacles, democracy has been restored, political situation is improving, many reforms were made... come and invest to help us develop our country," Hasina told them.

She said military rule for over two decades bred corruption and irregularities. "But if you come today, I am sure you will find lot of changes. Things are changing towards the right direction."

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh is a densely populated small country. After assuming power, present government has taken a strict stand for improving law-and-order situation. The incidence of crimes has come down.

About problems in Chittagong and Mongla seaports, Hasina said despite natural or political calamities, special efforts were made to keep both the ports operational round the clock.

About export of natural gas,

the Prime Minister said gas is the country's main natural resource. "Since we do not know the actual reserve, we can't export it now." However, she said the government would welcome investment in value-adding gas-based industries.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary Dr S A Samad, FBCCI president Yussuf Abdullah Haroon and Salman F Rahman also responded to various queries from Hamburg business leaders, including Lars Rohner, Managing Director of Schissahrsch Altes Land, Hans Hermann, Managing Director of Ostig Textile Company, and Saiful Islam, Managing Director of Picard Bangladesh Ltd.

Yussuf Abdullah Haroon said reforms were being made creating huge opportunities for foreign investment in Bangladesh, which he said is a big market. "This is the right time to invest in Bangladesh."

The Bangladesh business leader, however, said one of the problems Bangladesh is facing is image problem, but the reality is different at the moment. He said the FBCCI having business links with 40 countries are trying to cast off the negative image through interactions.

One German businessman who has a garment factory in Dhaka EPZ however praised the quick decision-making process and healthy environment for investment.

Dr S A Samad said the Prime Minister herself takes a lot of care about businesses in EPZs and has been touring abroad to redeem the country's image and restore confidence of foreign investors.

Salman F Rahman said apart from garments, Bangladesh is going for diversification of exports like ceramic, jewelry, food items and agro-products.

Opium, heroin

From page 12
in the city yesterday afternoon. Acting on a tip-off, police raided Bandhu Jewellers and picked up Suman Dhar, 24.

Later, on the basis of his statement, police seized one kg of opium and 220 grams of heroin concealed in the iron safe of the jewellery shop.

A case was filed with Kotwali thana under Narcotics Control Act, police said.

Arms recovered in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Dec 7: A special squad of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Chittagong zone recovered as many as nine fire-arms and some ammunition from Haidgaon of Patiya upazila today, CID sources said, reports BSS.

Acting on a secret information, CID team raided a shanty and recovered nine country made light guns and five bullets.

A case was filed with Patiya upazila.

Int'l training course on detecting heart disease begins Dec 10

By Staff Correspondent
A five-day international standard regional training course on "Detecting Heart Disease and Breast Cancer by ultra-modern Spect machine" will begin at Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University on December 10.

Trainee technologists from 20 countries will participate in the training programme which will be conducted by internationally reputed foreign and local experts.

The course has been organised by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine in cooperation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). IAEA will provide financial support for the course.

Director of the Institute of Nuclear Medicine Dr M A Karim is the Bangladesh counterpart of the programme while member (Bio Science) of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission Prof Nayeem Chowdhury is the country coordinator of the Regional Cooperation on Atomic Energy (RCA).

Insurgency, war fuel rights abuses in India, Sri Lanka

WASHINGTON, Dec 7: US-based Human Rights Watch highlighted serious rights abuses in Kashmir as well as violence against India's Christian and Muslim minorities in its annual report released today, says AFP.

The group also pointed to the long-running civil war in Sri Lanka as a grave source of rights abuses, including the killing of scores of civilians and the displacement of thousands more.

Human Rights Watch said the Hindu nationalist policies espoused by India's ruling BJP party and its affiliate organisations had "undermined" the country's historical commitment to secular democracy.

"Violence against Christian, Muslim, and Dalit, or 'untouchable,' populations was one result," the report said, citing 35 instances of anti-Christian attacks by mid-year -- mostly in the BJP-ruled states of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

"While government officials at the state and central level condemned the attacks, they did little to prosecute those responsible," it said.

The report also highlighted "grave human rights abuses" committed by Indian security forces and militant guerrillas in separatist-torn regions like Kashmir.

It accused Indian troops in Kashmir of "detaining young men, assaulting other family members, and summarily executing suspected militants" in the Muslim-majority state.

Many Kashmiri civilians were also killed or injured as a result of being caught in crossfire between soldiers and militants.

Atrocities were not blamed on the security forces alone, with the report citing attacks by Kashmiri militants on the state's Hindu and Sikh minorities.

Caste violence, especially in the feudal eastern state of Bihar, fuelled further abuses, with a series of tit-for-tat massacres by lower-caste farm labourers and upper-caste landlords.

A major campaign on Dalit rights gathered strength, but some human rights defenders were targets of a state-sponsored

backlash against their activism," the report said.

In Sri Lanka, renewed fighting between government forces and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) generated serious abuses.

"Intensified battles for control of key territory in the northern part of the island claimed scores of civilian lives and displaced some 250,000 people, bringing the estimated number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) nationwide to more than one million," the report said.

Sweeping powers granted to the Sri Lankan security forces resulted in arbitrary detention and restricted freedom of association.

Human Rights Watch also noted the LTTE's recruitment and deployment of "child soldiers" as well as its campaign of intimidation against critics in the Tamil community.

The report came out ahead of International Human Rights which is being marked this Sunday.

JS committee

From page 12

underway, meeting sources said. Those who attended the meeting included Committee member and State Minister for Relief and Disaster Management Talukder Abdul Khaleq, Mohammad Wazuddin Khan, Kazi Keramat Ali, Saleha Begum, Farida Rouf, A K M Mostafizur Rahman, Abu Yusuf Mohammad Khalilur Rahman, Zainul Abedin Faruq and Shahiduzzaman.

Three killed

From page 1

and beat up Singer Dolly Sayantani, the driver of the car and pop star Rabi Chowdhury. People alleged that Dolly was driving recklessly. The boy died on the spot.

Badda police rescued the two singers from the spot and took them to the police station.

Later thousands of people gheraoed the Badda police station and demanded that singers be handed over to them.

People were still surrounding the police station till filing of this report at about 8:30pm last night.

In another road mishap, an unidentified youth of about 25 years was crushed under the wheels of a vehicle at Green Road in the city. The body of the victim was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

In another road accident a man was crushed under the wheels of a bus near Kanchipur bridge.

The dead was identified as Samir, 45, of Dathbanga of Rourami in Kurigram.

The body of the victim was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Separate cases were filed with concerned police stations.

Production at Ghorashal Urea Factory suspended

Production at Ghorashal Urea Fertiliser Factory was suspended yesterday morning due to leakage developed in the auxiliary boiler of ammonia plant, according to a press release, reports BSS.

The production is now expected to resume on Sunday.

Authorities have started repairing the leakage immediately after the incident, the press release added.

Money suits

From page 1

Besides, 340 cases are pending disposal with the Additional Money Loan Court in Dhaka and 69 with the Additional Money Loan Court in Chittagong, the Committee was informed.

The report also said that till July 30 this year, the amount of total outstanding loans was Tk 61,144 crore, of which, 39.70 per cent or Tk 24,275 crore was classified.

The NCBs share of classified loans was Tk 13,042.51 crore, which is 44.62 per cent of their total outstanding loans. The specialised banks are burdened with Tk 6,408.17 crore unclassified loans, of which, 63.14 per cent is classified.

The report said the loans became classified because, in the past years, loans were disbursed under influence without judging their quality and also because of inside lending and lack of supervision.

It said the main problem of banking system in Bangladesh is the high rate of classified loans.

Against Tk 13,042.51 crore classified loans, a total of Tk 6,152.25 are required for provisioning, but there is a shortfall of Tk 4041.69 crore. The amount kept for provisioning is Tk 2110 crore.

The shortfall in the amount for provisioning is Tk 1974.25 crore with Sonali Bank, Tk 879.57 crore with Janata Bank, Tk 889.39 crore with Agrani Bank and Tk 298.48 crore with Rupali Bank.

It said that the central bank is pressuring the banks to fill up the amounts.

Indian parliament adjourned again over Babri Mosque row

NEW DELHI, Dec 7: Indian opposition MPs forced the adjournment of both houses of parliament for the fourth consecutive day today, amid a growing row over plans to build a Hindu temple on the ruin of a razed Babri Mosque, reports AFP.

Opposition MPs stormed the floors of both houses, demanding Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee apologise for his statement Wednesday that the Hindu temple campaign was an "unfinished" national task.

The Babri Mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya was razed by thousands of Hindu fanatics on December 6, 1992, sparking widespread Hindu-Muslim riots.

The Hindu rightwingers insisted that the 16th century Babri Masjid had been built over an earlier temple to the Hindu god Ram and demanded that a new Ram temple be constructed on the ruins of the mosque.

As well as calling for a retraction from Vajpayee, the opposi-

tion MPs on Thursday reiterated demands for the resignation of three ministers, including Home Minister L.K. Advani, who were present in Ayodhya in 1992 and implicated in the mosque's destruction.

Vajpayee has rejected the resignation demands as "baseless."

After both houses were adjourned, the prime minister was forced to hold a meeting with the leaders of his coalition allies, some of whom had echoed the opposition's anger at his statement on the Ayodhya dispute.

The PM's remarks on temple construction at this stage were unwarranted and had created controversy and a lot of confusion among allies and supporting parties," said regional TDP party leader K. Yerran Naidu said.

During the meeting, Vajpayee reportedly told his allies that his statement had referred to the policies of his own Hindu nationalist BJP party and not the policy of the coalition.

Truant Tayeb

From page 1

he had made such remarks against the party secretary general but subsequently regretted the "misunderstanding". He claimed that newspapers misquoted him. He also said that he issued a rejoinder on the matter yesterday.

At this stage, Khaleda Zia asked him why he issued a rejoinder after three days of the reported comment. Mannan Bhuiyan was also present at the meeting.

Tayeb finally apologized to Khaleda Zia and Mannan Bhuiyan and assured them that he would not do any mistake in future and abide by the instructions of the central leadership.

Bhuiyan, at the instruction of the party chief, had served the show cause notice on the five leaders for violating party discipline and forming a district committee without the consent of the central committee.

Sources said the former Speaker and the KCC Mayor had formed the district committee with their men in the leadership. This sparked off resentment and criticism in the rank and file of BNP.

The sources said the Mayor admitted to the party chief and the secretary general that he made a mistake in forming the district committee. He told them that a meeting of senior party leaders would be called soon to form a fresh committee.

Health assembly

From page 1

developing world. "According to the WHO, in the last 20 years at least 30 new diseases have emerged for which there is no medication and when the drugs for these emerge they will be too costly for the people who most need them," Dr Zafar said.

He, however, pointed out that there was a provision within TRIPS agreement to enforce compulsory licensing of essential drugs, but attempts to take advantage of this clause were being strongly opposed by Western governments.

Earlier, speaking in the morning session on "Environment and Survival" Dr Rosalie Bertell, a well known anti-nuclear campaigner from Canada, warned that the military around the world had changed its earlier role of safeguarding national sovereignty and were now acting as a protector of the overseas investment.

According to her, with globalisation of the world economy individual national armies should have been done away with, but now they had taken on a new purpose.

The military is the real strength behind the multinational arms race around the world and nuclear testing in particular, she said, was having an extremely harmful effect on global ecology.

The Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia would attend today's (Friday's) closing session that would seek people's ruling on whether to approve and finalise the draft People's Charter of Health.

25 hurt as villagers clash over land in Nilphamari

NILPHAMARI, Dec 7: At least 25 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over the ownership of a piece of land at Ramnagar in Sadar upazila this afternoon, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the clash erupted when supporters of Mobarak Ali of the village allegedly attacked day-labourer Jhakmol Ali to grab his land at about 2 pm.

Jhakmol claimed that two years ago a neighbour Afiauddin, who had no child, donated him the land. But after Afia's death, his nephew Mobarak has been creating trouble to grab the land.

Injured Jhakmol told the news agency that Mobarak along with his associates ransacked his house and set fire to it.

Seriously injured Muktar Ali, 28, Anisur Rahman, 25, Ali Hossain, 20, and Olmon, 50, were admitted to Nilphamari Modern Hospital, while other injured, including Jhakmol, were released after giving first aid.

Environment courts

From page 12
thumbing the authorities. A case in point is the 22 factories in Savar, which turn Dhaleshawri waters in the area into virtually wine-coloured with dyes during dry season.

A DOE official said new laws for setting up of environment courts would speed up quick prosecution of the polluters as the process taken a long time under conventional law. But the purpose is not being served.

Biman regains

From page 1
777-200ER and Airbus A340 by swapping four DC-10-30 is in progress.

"But the choice of aircraft will be left to a strategic partner who is likely to join Biman, buying 40 per cent of its shares under a privatisation programme. The process will be completed by March when we will be able to say who will be the partner," Rahman said.

At least six airlines have shown their interest to buy Biman's share.

In the 1999-2000 fiscal, Biman carried 358,288 passengers on domestic routes, which was two per cent less than those in the 19